LOVING-KINDNESS BUDDY WISHES

“Continue to be who and how you are, to astonish a mean world with your acts of kindness.”

—Maya Angelou

OVERVIEW

Students send kind wishes to themselves, a peer, and to people in their community.

PLANNING FOR IT

WHEN YOU MIGHT USE THIS PRACTICE

• Daily or weekly
• At the start of a school day, to close a class, during a classroom meeting, or as part of a mentoring-buddy program
• When you or your students are experiencing tension, anger, or anxiety

TIME REQUIRED

• 15-20 minutes

LEVEL

• Lower Elementary
• Upper Elementary

MATERIALS

• None
LEARNING OBJECTIVE

Students will:

- Practice extending positive wishes and kindness to themselves, a peer, and people in their community.

ADDITIONAL SUPPORTS

- Making Practices Culturally Responsive
- Adapting Practices for Students with Special Needs
- Making a Practice Trauma-Informed
- Making Classrooms and Schools Trauma-Informed and Healing-Centered

SEL COMPETENCIES

- Self-Awareness
- Social Awareness
- Relationship Skills

HOW TO DO IT

REFLECTION BEFORE THE PRACTICE

- Take a few deep breaths and consider colleagues, friends, students, and strangers you might send good wishes to before you begin. If you like, you may try this Loving-Kindness Meditation that includes a script and audio recording.

INSTRUCTIONS

GETTING STARTED

This practice is a great way to make loving-kindness more concrete for elementary students, and can be infused into a variety of settings. It is also a powerful representation of what it means to move from an individual focus to a focus on the community.

- Before you begin, have students get into pairs, such as simple classroom pairs or even multi-grade pairs with older and younger students serving as “buddies.”
- Tell students that they will be practicing sending kind wishes to themselves and to others.
- Ask them: *Have you ever sent a kind message to yourself—or to someone else? What kinds of things did you say in your mind?* (Have students share examples.) *How did it make you feel to send those wishes from your heart?* (Ask a few students to respond.)

THE PRACTICE
• **Send a Kind Wish to Yourself.**
  - Close or open your eyes. Find a comfortable position. You may want to try to sit up tall. Take a deep breath in and a deep breath out.
  - Think of one kind wish to send to yourself. It could be sending yourself Peace, Love, Courage, Hope, or the chance to just Be.
  - Breathe the kind wish deep into your heart and slowly breathe out.

• **Share a Kind Wish with Each Other**
  - Now face your partner/buddy. You can sit knee to knee and look into each other’s eyes, or just sit across from each other while you focus on the floor.
  - Take a moment to think of one kind wish to say to each other.
  - Take turns sharing your kind wish with each other. (If students are paired in older/younger buddies, have the older buddy share their kind wish with the younger buddy. Then switch and have the younger buddy share their kind wish with the older buddy.)
  - Take a deep breath in together and a deep breath out.

• **Group Brainstorm—Kind Wish for the Greater Good.**
  - Take a deep breath in and a deep breath out.
  - Take a moment and think of a kind wish to send to a person who could use a bit of love. This could be a grandparent or a teacher or it can be someone in need.
  - Raise your hand to share your kind wish with the group. (You can write these wishes on a whiteboard so the group can see the collective output.)

• **Group Kind Wish Breath into the World.**
  - Take one breath in as a group.
  - Take in all the kind wishes that we shared in the room, and send a big community Kind Wish breath out into the world.

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**CLOSURE**

- Ask students to reflect on this practice. What did they think of this exercise? How did it make them feel? When might they do this practice again? Why?

**REFLECTION AFTER THE PRACTICE**

- How did students respond to this practice? Do you notice if they are expressing more positive emotions or are more optimistic as a result?

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**THE RESEARCH BEHIND THE PRACTICE**

**EVIDENCE THAT IT WORKS**

Researchers have discovered that toddlers as young as 14-months demonstrate a natural capacity for kindness, but this capacity must be nurtured through healthy relationships with adults and peers—the foundation of a positive school climate.

**WHY DOES IT MATTER?**
Studies have found that kind students who are well-liked by their peers are helpful, cooperative, and emotionally well-adjusted. In addition, students who show kindness at a young age achieve greater academic and social success in the long-run.

This practice, inspired by loving-kindness meditation (which has been found to have a positive impact on adults’ empathy, compassion, and social connection), cultivates young students’ innate kindness by asking them to send friendly wishes to the world.

**SOURCE**

Mindful Littles Loving-Kindness Buddy Wishes. Mindful Littles is a 501(c)(3) nonprofit organization dedicated to fostering mindful compassionate cultures in schools, homes and local communities through meaningful service learning experiences and creative educational programs that teach mindfulness and social-emotional skills, build inner resilience and spark courageous compassionate action.